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NAAMAN *Cleansed.*

BEING THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A
SERMON

PREACHED AT
SMITH'S-HALL, BRISTOL.

By *J O H N C E N N I C K.*
Late of *Reading*, in *Berkshire.*

*My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great
Thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much
rather then when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?
2 Kings v. 13.*

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TO THE READER.

I Have read the following Sermon, and like it much.—It was preached by a young Witness, not indeed as yet sent out by Imposition of Hands from Man, but I am persuaded, taught and sent out by God.—This Sermon is one Proof of it.—I could give a thousand more, and rejoice in this Opportunity of publicly acknowledging the Preacher of it to be a dear Servant of Jesus Christ.—May the Lord bless what he has written to thy Soul, O Reader, whoever thou art, and incline thee to pray for him, and thy Friend and Servant in Jesus,

London, March

11, 1742-3.

G. Whitefield.



2 KINGS V. 13.

My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?

THESE Words were spoken by the Servants of Naaman the Assyrian Captain, when he was despising the Means God (by *Elisha*) had ordered him to use for the healing of his Leprosy. The whole History of his Cure and Conversion is so very instructive, that I would paraphrase upon it awhile; and then declare the Freeness of the Grace of our Saviour to poor leprous Sinners, and the Way in which all must come to his Kingdom.

Benhadad the King of Syria had often sent out his Soldiers by Companies against the Children of *Israel*, and had taken among the Captives a little Maid, and she waited on *Naaman's* Wife, who when she saw that her Master had the Disease of Leprosy, and had known in her own Country, how many were healed of the Lord by the Hand of *Elisha*, she said in the House, "Would to God, my Lord was with the Prophet that is in *Samaria*, for he would recover him of his Leprosy." After this Manner she ceased not to speak, 'till one told it to *Naaman*, saying, "Thus and thus said the Maid that is of the *Hebrews*," It might be the Girl had been an Eye-

witness of some of the great Things done by *Elisha* or had known some of her Neighbours that had been recovered by him, and had heard the Fame of the Man of God, how he did not refuse any who came to him, and therefore was more earnest to have her Master go and try. After some Time, what the Maid spake came to the Ears of King *Benhadad*; and because *Naaman* was beloved by him, and was a great Man in the Army, and esteemed on Account of the many Victories the Lord had given by him to the *Assyrians*, the King immediately hastened *Naaman* forward in his Way to *Samaria*. He was one who worshipped the Gods of the *Heathens*, and not knowing the free Gift of the God of *Jacob*, he thought to please him, and to get an Interest in his Favour, by offering his Prophet a great present. Wherefore he sent ten Talents of Silver, six thousand Pieces of Gold, and ten Changes of Raiment; and wrote a Letter to the King of *Israel*, to desire him to get his Servant healed of his Leprosy.

Now the King of *Israel* thought he only meant hereby to pick a Quarrel with him, and therefore rent his Cloaths, saying, "Am I God, to kill or to make alive, that this Man hath sent to me to heal his Servant?" *Elisha*, hearing of this, sent to the King, saying, "Why hast thou rent thy Cloaths? Let the Man come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in *Israel*. So *Naaman* came with his Horses, and with his Chariot, and stood at the Door of *Elisha*." It is remarkable, he did not come like a poor, filthy, diseased Leper, as he was, but he was arrayed in fine Linen, in Purple and Scarlet: He was accompanied with a great Retinue; with his Presents of Gold, Silver, and costly Apparel. We do not read that he came down out of his Chariot, and fell on his Knees before *Elisha's* Door, and uncovered

covered his loathsome Body, and spread open all his Want before the Prophet. No! he came with his Reward in his Hand, (as it were) and sat still in his Robes in his Chariot, and thought thus to recommend himself to the Clemency and Pity of the Man of God. I dare say, he boldly bid his Page knock at the Door and say, My Lord *Naaman* is here, and offers thee all this great Riches, these Changes of Raiment, Gold and Silver in Abundance. Come thou therefore and heal him of his Leprosy. I suppose the Captain would not suffer a dubious Thought if he should be accepted or not. Had any body met him, and asked him, How canst thou, who art an enemy to the *Hebrews*, look for Mercy at the Hands of their God, or at the Hands of his Prophet? Doubtless he would have answered, True, I am at Variance with the Seed of *Jacob*, and have formerly done Harm to the House of *Israel*, but see, I make Amends so far as I have Power, and will fully satisfy the Prophet for all his Trouble when he shall have healed me.

Well, he waited at *Elisha's* Door, and expected no common Message to be delivered to him, but that some Oracle would pronounce him whole, or that the Prophet himself would come out to him, and pray to the Lord God of *Israel*, and then strike his Hand over the sore Place, and by a Miracle recover him. But instead of this, the Prophet took no Notice at all of his being a great Man, or of his Presents, or of his pompous coming, but abode still in the House, and sent out *Gehazi* his Servant to tell him, "Go wash in *Jordan* seven Times, and thy Flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." This so provoked him, that without much regarding what *Gehazi* said, he bid his Chariot Driver turn away,

away, and in Anger breathed out the Language of his heart, and said, "I thought he would have come out to me, and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God, and strike his Hand over the Place, and recover the Leper. What (thought he) have I undertaken so vast a Journey, and come so far only to hear that fellow bid me go and wash in *Jordan*? If washing would have done away the Leprosy, I needed not to have come into *Israel* for Water. *Abana* and *Pharpar* Rivers of *Damascus*, are not they better than all the Waters of *Israel*? May I not wash in them, and be clean? And he turned away in a rage."

When he had heard the Means of his Recovery, see how he slighted it. Because he did not know how the "Lord chuses the Things that are weak and base, and Things that are despised," to do his Will, he reasoned within himself, and thought, If Water could take away the Leprosy, would not so many learned and wise Men as have been in the World have found out that Remedy before now? or might not the Man, (if Water would cure me) have said to me, Go and bathe thyself in thine own excellent Rivers at Home, and thou shalt be healed? and while he thus thought, one of his Servants came near to the Side of the Chariot, and besought him, saying, "My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, go some long Journey, and dip thyself in some foreign spring, or do some hard Work, or give some great portion of thy Substance away for the Spices and Ointment of the Apothecary or Merchant, or bid thee buy it with a great Sum of Money, wouldst thou not have done it? wouldst thou not have gladly complied and taken his Advice?" And *Naaman* thought in his Heart, and answered, "I would. If he had bid me do any thing, if he had said, by

Works

Works thou mayest be healed; by Fasting, Prayer, Almsgiving, or any Work more hard to be done, I would have obeyed." Then said his Servant, "How much rather then when he saith to thee, wash and be clean!" These words the Lord graciously set home upon his Heart, and he repented of his Pride, and Self-wisdom, and instead of offering rich Presents, arraying himself delicately, &c. he pulled off all his Garments, and went down into *Jordan* just as he was, a poor, stinking, filthy Leper; and he no sooner obeyed the Voice of the Lord, by plunging himself seven Times in the Waters, but he was changed; he found he was healed, and his Flesh came again like the Flesh of a little Child: Immediately he believed in the God of *Israel*, and returned to the Door of *Elisha's* House, he and all his Company, and stood before *Elisha*, and said, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the Earth but in *Israel*; thy Servant will henceforth offer neither Burnt Offerings, nor Sacrifice unto other Gods, but unto the Lord." How happy was it for *Naaman*, that he hearkened to the Voice of the Lord by his Servant? He not only was washed from the Leprosy of his Body, but from the Unbelief and Sin of his Soul. He could then truly adore Free Grace alone: He was convinced it was not of his own will, for he would have gone home to *Damascus* in a Rage, but the Lord freely put it into the little Maid's Heart first to wish, "Would to God my Lord was with the Prophet in *Israel*, for he would heal him of his Leprosy." And when he had rejected the Way appointed to be healed, as if the Lord had said of him as he did of *Ephraim*, "How shall I give thee up?" He yet put it into the Heart of one of his Servants to go and speak mildly to him to stop him from returning home, by saying to him, "Nay, my Father, if
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the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather when he *only* saith to thee, wash and be clean?"

It may be, you who are here, are quite ignorant that you have on a more dreadful Leprosy than that which clave to *Naaman*, alas! my dear, dear Brethren, ye have got the Leprosy of Sin. I am To-day forced to say to you as the little Maid to *Naaman*, "Would to God you were with the Prophet that is in *Israel*, I mean the Lord Jesus Christ, he would heal you of your Leprosy." I need not bid my dear Hearers go wash seven Times, the Merit of the seven Streams of Jesus are all one: And whosoever once washes there, needs no more Sacrifice for Sin. *Heb. x. 18.*

The Leprosy was a Disease of all others the most to be feared, for other Diseases were frequently cured, but this seldom, for which Cause the People of *Israel* were used to put out their Lepers from them into desert Places, and feed them there, lest they should infect others. *Lev. xiii. 46.* And the Lord forbad those that had this Distemper to come into his Congregation. *Numb. v. 3.* It was a Disease that at first broke out in a little white Scab, and if not prevented or healed, overspread the whole Body, and made them as if a white Scurf was upon them. How well doth this Description serve to set out Sin? It broke out first in *Adam* in one Sin like the Scab of the Leprosy, and not being stopped, it increased till he was altogether corrupt and infected, till God cast him as it were out of his Presence into the Earth. Of him were we all, and every one of us have from our Birth, had this cursed Disease, as it is written in *David* "Behold I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me," *Pf. li. 5.* I don't doubt but

but you can answer and say, we know we have this Disease of Sin, we have felt it often rise in our Nature, and spread itself, that the longer we live, instead of growing better, we grow worse and worse; we commit more and more Sin every Day. O my People, it will spread farther still, till it have ruined you Body and Soul, if you can't stop it! "Would to God you were with the Prophet Jesus, he would heal you, he would make your crimson Sins like Wool, and your Sins that have been like Scarlet, whiter than snow," Isa. i. 18. Men are naturally like *Naaman*, and think that they must bring Presents to the Lord, and do a great deal of Good before he will heal them; and this makes some poor Souls go bow'd down Day after Day, and mourn, and will not be comforted. Their Language is, O! I am afraid I shall never be saved! I tremble to think what will become of me if I should die! I have been a Drunkard, an unjust Person; I have lived in Fornication, Uncleannefs, and Lies; I have been a Sinner all my Life, even from my Infancy; What shall I do to be saved? O that such would come to the Lord! He would receive them, he would in no wise cast them out. But, say they, I am worse than anybody, there is not one good Thing in me; I am nothing but Sin for my Part. Well then, you have the most Need of coming to the Son of God, he will make you a new Heart and a new Spirit, wherein his Spirit shall dwell. O! say they, but I have nothing to bring to the Lord; I can't so much as truly repent for Sin; my Heart is as hard as the nether Millstone; I cannot pray; I can do nothing. Have you not heard now *Naaman* with all he brought was not accepted, nor made clean, till he stripped himself of all, and renouncing his own Wisdom, went down into the River *Jordan* naked? So must thou, O sinner, go to the Lord, poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. 'Tis

written in the Scripture, "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them all," Luke vii. 42.

If thou hadst lived in all Form of Godliness to this Day, and not missed going to Church, Sacraments, Prayers, Fastings, &c. once when thou hadst Opportunity, in all thy Life, yet this would not recommend thee to the Lord any more than all the Presents which *Naaman* brought to *Elisha*; thou must leave all thou hast, and come stripp'd and poor to Christ, or thou canst not be his disciple.

Some, when they do good (as they call it) and do not do much Harm, but are kind to the Poor, and do Justice, and refrain from outward gross Sins, like Publicans and Harlots, can go boldly to God, and not fear their going to Heaven. Just so did *Naaman* go to the House of the Prophet; but all his good Things did not make the Man of God so much as come out to him; but on the contrary, he sent out a poor Servant to tell him, Go strip thyself, and go wash in Jordan, and thou shalt be clean. Just so I come to-day, to tell you, it is not your Self-righteousness, your long Roll of good Deeds done, will make you to be accepted with my Master. "Publicans and Harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before others," Mat. xxi. 31. Not because they were such, but because these are the more easily convinced of their own Poverty of Spirit, and having no Righteousness of their own to trust on, they more gladly embrace and trust on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus: These also knowing they have much forgiven them, will love the more. You must come to our Saviour poor as you are, in your Sins and in your Blood. Don't desire to cover your Sin, and hide you behind the Fig-leaves of your own Goodness, for so did our first Parents, when they had sinn'd in *Eden*, and yet escaped not the Curse. And so also did *Naaman*: But if you would be saved, go
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and fall down by the bloody wounds of Jesus, and there shew all your secret Iniquity, Lust, Pride, Covetousness, Anger, and Unbelief the chief of all, and wash in that Stream, and you shall be clean. Be ye assured it is no Works that you have done, or can do, that will recommend you to the Favour of God, as saith the Apostle, "Not by Works, lest any Man boast," Eph. ii. 9. *i. e.* lest any glory, and say, I have done well, I have lived a good Life, therefore I am accepted of God. No: "all boasting is excluded, Rom. iii. 27.

Every one that is saved shall confess, to the Glory of Jesus Christ, "Not by Works of Righteousness that I have done, but according to his mercy he saved me, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. v. "Not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name give Glory, Psalm cxv. 1. Yea in Heaven no Mention is made of what they did who are arrived there, but of what Christ did for them. The Blood of the Lamb, which is our only Salvation, is there glorified and praised. This is that *Jordan*, where I would beseech my dear Brethren (who feel the Leprosy of Sin is on them) to come and wash. Believing in the Lord, is washing. Only "believe, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. Only wash, and thou shalt be clean.

Many here are ready (it may be) to turn away in a Rage, and say, What is this all I come to hear? Believe, and be saved? O! I'll never be convinced this is true! Do you think that all the Good I have done, and all my Prayers and Cries will avail nothing? If I go constantly to Church, and receive the blessed Sacrament, and believe the Scriptures, and pray every Morning and Evening, and do all the Good I can, may I not be sure of going to Heaven? No: "There is no other Name given under Heaven whereby Men can be saved,

saved, but the Name of Jesus Christ," Acts iv. 12.'

That Language which is almost in every ones Mouth is the same with that of *Naaman's*. What (saith he) are not *Abana* and *Pharpar*, Rivers of *Damascus*, better than all the Waters of *Israel*? May I not wash in them and be clean? So say many of you, Are not good Works, a sober, honest, and religious Life enough to save us? May we not wash in these, and be clean? The Lord points out the only Way, saying, "I am the Way," John xiv. 6. And again, "This is the Way, walk in it," Isa. xxx. 21. And one wisely said of Christ, He is so narrow a Way, so strait a Door, that except you pull off all your Cloaths you can't get in. Our Saviour don't want any of your Righteousness. It is all in his pure Sight but painted Iniquity; it is but filthy Rags, Isa. lxiv. 6. ~~He is so narrow a Way, so strait a Door, that except you pull off all your Cloaths you can't get in.~~

He calls you then only who are poor. "To this Man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor," Isa. lxvi. 2. Yea, except you can reckon yourselves upon a Level with the worst Sinners, Murderers, Thieves, Publicans, you have not seen your Nature. You don't know yourselves, and till you do, you can by no Means see the Want of the dear Redeemer's blood. You will be always striving to make yourselves clean, and when you have strove all your Life, find that true which was spoken of the Children of *Israel*, "They followed after Righteousness, but have not attained Righteousness, because they sought it not by Faith, but (as it were) by Works," Rom. ix. 31, 32.

But again, I beseech you hear the Word of the Lord, "Your Righteousness is of me." And again, "Come to me,—and I will give you a Rest for your Soul," Mat. xi. 28. And again, "I counsel thee to buy of me Raiment, that the Shame of thy Nakedness

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ness do not appear," Rev. iii. 18. "Buy of me freely without Money, and without Price," i. e. for nothing, Isa. lv. 1.

Paul, who was born a Jew, gloried as much in this as you do in your being born Christians; but by and by, he found, "That he was not a Jew, who was one outwardly, or did like Jews in outward Things, but he (saith he) is a Jew who is one inwardly, *Rom.* ii. 28, 29. If you are not Christians inwardly, in vain do you make Profession of Christ outwardly; and unless you are inwardly washed with the Blood of Jesus, by the Holy Ghost, Baptism of Water is nothing. So except you inwardly live by the Merit of the Wounds of the Body of our Saviour, in vain do you eat and drink in his Presence Bread and Wine. The Apostle was "of the Seed of Abraham, (to whom the Promises were made) of the Tribe of Benjamin, and lived as touching the Righteousness of the Law blameless," *Rom.* xi. 1. *Phil.* iii. 5, 6. Yea he was not only religious as were others of the strict Sect of the Pharisees, but more exceedingly zealous than many of his Equals in his own Nation and at *Jerusalem*, *Gal.* i. 14. But yet all this was not enough to bring him to Heaven; all would not do: When he was convinced of his Sin, as he was riding to *Damascus*, he cried out in the Bitterness of his Soul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" *Acts* ix. 6. Neither did he rest from crying, neither would he eat or drink till *Ananias* brought him that glorious Message (which I now bring you) "Why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy Sin, calling on the Name of the Lord!" *Acts* xxii. 16. So also it is written of *Joshua* the High-Priest, that when he stood before the Lord in his own Righteousness, it was as filthy Garments; but when the Lamb of God had said to him, "Behold I have caused

sed thine Iniquity to pass away," he had on Change of Raiment, *i. e.* the Righteousness of Christ, and then he was no more before the Lord as unclean, but clean to a Wonder! So as the Angel owned of him and his Fellow Saints, "Ye are Men to be wondered at!" Zech. iii. His Covering was then "the Covering of the Spirit of the Lord," *Isa.* xxx. 1. O may you be covered with this holy Vestment, this Robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb, *Rev.* vii. 14.

When *Naaman's* Anger was a little appeased, his Servants reasoned with him, as I now do with you. The Lord grant my Words may have the like Effect with his! I mean, to win you to come and try the Virtue of this blessed *Bethesda*, the Blood of Jesus, this true *Jordan*. Be not offended, my dear Friends, if the Lord don't appear in any miraculous Way; but hear, if he speaks by unworthy me, or sends me to you, as *Elisba* sent *Gehazi* to *Naaman*, to tell you, ye must wash and be clean. Don't answer, What is this Stripling? or, how comest thou to be right, when so many wise and learned Men, after thy Sayings, are wrong? My dear Friends, The Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God, and the Thoughts of the wisest Men before the Lord are vain, *1 Cor.* i. 20. And God often chuses to let wise Men err in their own Prudence, when he reveals his Truth to Babes, *Luke* x. 21. Then let not your dear Souls turn away in a Rage; but O! be intreated to go down to the *Jordan* of Christ's Blood—It is better than all the Rivers of *Damascus*. All the Cries and Tears of every Saint in the World can't wash away one Sin; but O! one Drop of the Blood of the Lamb will cleanse you of All, if you have ten Thousand Thousands, yea, if every Sin that have been committed by all the Children of
Adam,

Adam, since the Foundation of the World, (saving the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost) were to be charged upon any one of you, and I knew it, I would yet say to you, Come, wash and be clean ! there is still room ! *Luke xiv. 22.* The Door of the Lord's Wounds is still open, escape hither for your Life, my dear Brethren.

I don't doubt but many of you are willing to be saved, and if the Lord had bidden you do some great Thing, would you not have done it ? Methinks I hear you say, I would, if I knew what the Will of the Lord was, I would do it, though I went through Hell for a Time, so that I might but be saved. O poor Brethren ! you may be saved freely. He only saith to you, Wash and be clean.

No sooner had *Naaman* put off all that fine Apparel (which he thought would have moved the Prophet to look upon him) and entered the River, but his Flesh returned like the Flesh of a little Child ; he found his Distemper was taken away, and he came up out of the Water whole and rejoicing. So if you could be prevailed upon to put off your own Righteousness, lay down your own Wisdom, and come to the Lord Jesus, wretched and undone as you are ; if you could wholly trust the Merits of his blessed Blood, and believe on his Name, you would find your Sin, that hateful Leprosy, washed away, and yourselves converted, and made like little Children, *Mat. xviii. 3.* If any of you feel yourselves impure, burthened, yea, tho' you feel yourselves nothing but Sin and Uncleaness, how can you stay away ? Or how can you doubt your Right to wash in this Blood, when you may read upon the Fountain-head, This Fountain was open for Sin and for Uncleaness, *Zech. xiii. 1.* If you have surely seen your Sin, surely you may see the Lamb of God invites you compassionately to wash you in him. The Spirit knocks at your Heart, say-
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ing, Come : The Church, the People of God, the Lamb's wife saith, Come. Yea, saith the Lord, let him that heareth consent, and say, Come, O my Soul come. Whosoever will let him come, and take of the Water freely, *Rev. xxii. 17.* At this Spring poor weary Sinners may drink and wash them too ; here you may put away the Evil of your Doings, and make yourselves white as Snow. O be intreated ! (I beseech you in Christ's stead) and come, and try the Virtues of this healing Spring. You cannot, know you cannot make yourselves clean ; the Lord saith, " from all your Filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," *Ezek. xxxvi. 25.*

When happy *Naaman* was cleansed, he would have been glad if the whole World could (like him) have proved the Power of the God of Israel. So the Woman of *Samaria* (when she had found Jesus the Fountain of living Waters) left her Water-pot by the Side of the Well, and was for having all the City come, and draw Water out of this Well, Christ. So you (when you have known what it is to have the Love of God shed abroad in your Hearts) will be of the same Mind. O, you will be for telling all your Friends and Neighbours, what great Things the Lord hath done for your Souls, and how the Lord hath had Compassion upon you. Then (as *Naaman* after his Cure wanted to make *Elisha* amends, you will desire and long to praise the Lord our Saviour, and to live to his Glory in Time and in Eternity ! O that ye may indeed believe, and prove the Things I now say are true ! May you never, never rest till you can triumphantly say, I am washed, I am sanctified, I am justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, *1 Cor. vi. 11.* To him, even the Lamb, God, blessed for ever ! be Glory and Thanksgiving, World without End. Amen.

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